

WASTE DISPOSAL

MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

RELATIVE TO THE DISPOSAL OF WASTES IN THE GREAT LAKES AND THE OCEANS

APRIL 15, 1970.—Referred to the Committee on Public Works and ordered to be printed

To the Congress of the United States:

The first of the Great Lakes to be discovered by the seventeenth century French explorers was Lake Huron. So amazed were these brave men by the extent and beauty of that lake, they named it "The Sweet Sea".

Today there are enormous sections of the Great Lakes (including almost all of Lake Erie) that make such a title ironic. The by-products of modern technology and large population increases have polluted the lakes to a degree inconceivable to the world of the seventeenth century explorers.

In order to contribute to the restoration of these magnificent waters, this Administration will transmit legislation to the Congress which would stop the dumping of polluted dredged spoil into the Great Lakes.

This bill would:

- Discontinue disposal of polluted dredged materials into the Great Lakes by the Corps of Engineers and private interests as soon as land disposal sites are available.
- Require the disposal of polluted dredged spoil in containment areas located at sites established by the Corps of Engineers and approved by the Secretary of the Interior.
- Require States and other non-Federal interests to provide one-half the cost of constructing containment areas and also provide needed lands and other rights.

—Require the Secretary of the Army, after one year, to suspend dredging if local interests were not making reasonable progress in attaining disposal sites.

I am directing the Secretary of the Army to make periodic reports of progress under this program to the Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality.

This bill represents a major step forward in cleaning up the Great Lakes. On the other hand, it underlines the need to begin the task of dealing with the broader problem of dumping in the oceans.

About 48 million tons of dredgings, sludge and other materials are annually dumped off the coastlands of the United States. In the New York area alone, the amount of annual dumping would cover all of Manhattan Island to a depth of one foot in two years. Disposal problems of municipalities are becoming worse with increased population, higher per capita wastes, and limited disposal sites.

We are only beginning to find out the ecological effects of ocean dumping and current disposal technology is not adequate to handle wastes of the volume now being produced. Comprehensive new approaches are necessary if we are to manage this problem expeditiously and wisely.

I have therefore directed the Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality to work with the Departments of the Interior, the Army, other Federal agencies, and State and local governments on a comprehensive study of ocean dumping to be submitted to me by September 1, 1970. That study will recommend further research needs and appropriate legislation and administrative actions.

Specifically, it will study the following areas:

- Effects of ocean dumping on the environment, including rates of spread and decomposition of the waste materials, effects on animal and plant life, and long-term ecological impacts.
- Adequacy of all existing legislative authorities to control ocean dumping, with recommendations for changes where needed.
- Amounts and areas of dumping of toxic wastes and their effects on the marine environment.
- Availability of suitable sites for disposal on land.
- Alternative methods of disposal such as incineration and re-use.
- Ideas such as creation of artificial islands, incineration at sea, transporting material to fill in strip mines or to create artificial mountains, and baling wastes for possible safe disposal in the oceans.
- The institutional problems in controlling ocean dumping.

Once this study is completed, we will be able to take action on the problem of ocean dumping.

The legislation being transmitted today would control dumping in the Great Lakes. We must now direct our attention to ocean dumping or we may court the same ecological damages that we have inflicted on our lands and inland waters.

RICHARD NIXON.

THE WHITE HOUSE, *April 15, 1970.*

